VALDIVIA, Antonio A.

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NARRATOR

Signature of narrator

Antonio A. Valdivia
Name of narrator

1535 - 16th St.
Address

Oakland CA

(dated) 7-29-81

INTERVIEWER

Eleanor H. Swent
Signature of interviewer

Eleanor H. Swent
Name of interviewer

One King Av. - Piedmont
Address of interviewer

CA 94611

(dated) 7-29-81

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by _____ _____
(Project Director) (Dated)

Father Antonio Valdivia

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History Project

General Topic of Interview Fruitvale History (Mex. Am. pop.)

Date 7-29-81 Place St. Anthony's Rectory 1535-16th St. - Oakland Length 60 min.

Narrator	Interviewer
Name Fr. Anthony Valdivia	Name Eleanor Swent
Address 1535 - 16th St. Oakland	Address One King Av. Piedmont - CA - 94611
Name & address of relative, friend Rectory, St. Anthony's	Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.] none
Birthplace W. Oakland - 7th & Chestnut	Length of acquaintance
Birthdate 4.13.1937	Occasion of interview
Occupation(s) Diocesan Priest	

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

Estimated Time on Tape	Contents
1 - 100	b. W. Oakland - 7th & ~~Cla~~ Chestnut. St. Joseph's - Portugese, Italian, Mexican - European multilingual priests Parents left Jalisco - Mex. revolution 1911 - worked on R.R. Barstow - etc. to Benicia - Crockett - Harry Bridges - CIO Came to Oakland - warehouse job. Opened restaurant in 1910-20 1st wave of Mexicanos WWII - 7th & Market next to Star Theater - 1st Mex. movie
100 - 200	FDR & Camacho Braceros - 2nd wave of Mexicanos - Many Mexicanos fs. Revolution got involved in unionism here Foundries - shipyards - iron works - came in village groups Club Las Inditas - dance folklorico - Sra. Villa - "la Calle Siete" - the street itself was an institution "Mi Rancho" - Consuelo Covian

Use back of sheet if necessary

200- Cole School - Lafayette - St. Mary's School - 7th St. St. Mary's Cath. cemetery
Hex. mourning customs - "novenario". New immigrants now are
* "fertilizing" the culture - keep the customs alive.
* 275- Star Theater - Sunday matinees for the kids - 10¢ - new cultural item -
● 350 Dec. 7-1941 - Japanese neighbors
Children spoke English among themselves "I grew up very confident
of my Mexican background.... I grew up in an area where
375-400 everyone Spoke more than one language]" First resistance in seminary
425- Castro Valley - Portugese. "the seeds of my language abilities were
planted in West Oakland. That's W.O. for me."
Blacks came in W.O. - WW II - then "a normal progression" to
450 * other districts. Freeway "Everybody moved out."
"East Oakland or head out to Hayward." Bought Mrs. Coviaus house -
"In my day, if you moved to E.O. you were getting up in the world."
Piano teacher - Mrs. Victoria Castillo Mesa
B 1-100 Candy shop - Greek? Housewives Market - 6th - Castro - Wash -
Bill's Market. Restaurant - WW II - shipyard workers were brought in
~~trucks~~ buses for lunch - Day & evening - 7 days a week - parents
lived at the restaurant
100- 1966 - growing Span. pop. in Oakland - St. Bernard's until 1971 -
newly arrived Hex! more literate - social agencies available - families
clustered - Started first Span. Sunday mass. Cultural feast -
Guadalupe - Chicano students at Fremont H.S.
* ● 200- Black Power - Asian - high school riots - "all hell broke loose"
Cal. State Hayward - Union City -
parish includes -
250- Chavinda, Michoacan - La Palma Mich. Durango
Ziúaparo, Mich. Amatlán de Cañas, Jal.
* 270- Friction betw. Mexican & Mex/Am.
different styles - music - approach to religion - language
300- St. Anthony's began as Irish - now majority Hex - Hispan.,
Portegese, Filipinos, Black, old white (Irish).
330- Valdivia came in 1976 - Mexican immigration growing -
"significant number" are undocumented.
St. A's School - very strong reading program - "the only tool we can give"
400- 1970 census predicted this parish would be mostly
Sr. Citizens - not true - many families - immigrants -
Hex. - Korean - Vietnamese - Cambodians
* 415- French-speaking Vietnamese - "La Maison Rouge" 214-20th St
Father York was very anti-English (1910), pro-union.
Rectory has secret passageway where he had printing press.
● 450- Current concerns - union is here - now safeguarding
the rights of the undocumented - developing office from
the diocese to help - education for children - workers are
* coming out of their coccoon - they suffer.
by force she has to -- become more fluent, meet the
community.

Father Anthony Valdivia, of St. Anthon'ys Church, was born in West Oakland, and paints a beautiful picture of the multinational, multilingual atmosphere there before the War.

A beautiful anecdote of Pearl Harbor, and the loss of his Japanese playmate.

Anecdote of his mother communicating with a neighbor, although neither of them had a common language.

Coping with the violence of the '60's, working with the young people of East Oakland. Emphasis on education, especially reading, in the schools. Work with undocumented aliens now coming in.

Immigration mainly from certain villages in Mexico. Again, intimations of strain between prior immigrants and recent ones.

Interview with Fr. Anthony Valdivia , Oakland, CA
Interviewer: Eleanor Swent
Date: 7/29/81 Transcriber: Tamar J. Nelson
S: Abbreviation for Swent V: Abbreviation for Valdivia
Tape 1, Side 1

S: You were born in West Oakland?

V: I was born in West Oakland, as I said I didn't make it to the hospital. I was born in the home on 7th and Chestnut...which is kitty corner to the old church of St. Joseph's that is no longer there...

S: And this church was mainly Portuguese?

V: It was mainly Portuguese, Italian and Spanish speaking, Mexican...I was an altar boy there and I have very fond memories of the parish because of it's multilingualism..We had mass in English, another mass in Portuguese, another mass in Italian and then the mass in English.

S: So they had priests from all these other countries?

V: No that was the funny thing about it...they weren't all from all these countries there were only two priests, but they spoke all these languages. So I grew up with the impression that the priest was multilingual. A very cultured man and he was - just to see those men shift from one language to another. Father Alphonso Stav (unsure of spelling) he used to speak German and Polish in addition to Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and they were all Europeans...

S: And your parents had come from Mexico at the time of the revolution?

V: They came from the state of Jalisco, my Dad from a little town right on the shores of Lake Chapala, and also my mom from this town of Ocotlán agian from Lake Chapala...

S: How did they happen to come to Oakland, do you know?

V: Basically, it was through my Dad. He came through working on the railroad - the Pacific or the Santa Fe, I forget which one, just laying tracks. He always spoke of Indio and Barstow...finally they made their way with the tracks all the way up...I have pictures of my folks living in a train, I suppose that was the way the company would give lodging for family. They would take a train that couldn't be used any more and convert it into a home...Benecia that was as they got

V: and then my Mom said, "That's it, we're never going to build up a family with stability if we keep moving"...and then he began working at Crawford, the beginnings of C & H and that was around the 30's and then Harry Bridges came in and organized labor, the workers in the old CIO...he got very involved in the beginnings of that and he was quite a union man ...and then we moved to Oakland. (Note: came here because of job opportunities in warehousing.)

S: Was there a Mexican community here at that time?

V: A very small one, it was over there on 7th and Chestnut, 7th and Adeline and 7th and Market...

S: Do you remember the names of any of the restaurants?

V: Well, I remember my family's restaurant, they opened a restaurant during the second World War. It was called Jalisco Cafe on 7th and Market which was right next door to the old Star theatre which was the first theatre to show Mexican movies.

S: By then there were enough Mexicans to...

V: Oh yeah, then there were the Braceros...

S: You were saying there were two basic waves, the first being the people fleeing the Revolución from 1910 to...

V: 1920 and then...

S: So these were perhaps, well what would be the difference, would they be more conservative...?

V: No! I suppose not so much conservative, I don't know if they were conservative or perhaps even somewhat more revolutionary...a lot of them were involved in the union activities of Harry Bridges, and they really got into that - I suppose it was a carry over of the fight for a better cause in Mexico...During the second World War through F.D.R. and Ávila Camacho, President of Mexico, they agreed to allow certain men, Braceros,

V: to come in and help out with the economy during the war...

S: How did they get to Oakland?

V: Well, I think there was a lot offered at that time. The foundries, the shipyards, and you had different steel mills starting up, iron works ...as always the immigrants usually follow somebody from their town...

S: Did you hear anything about a Club Zaragoza?

V: No, at the time the only clubs I knew were the church clubs and then there was a Club Las Inditas that danced folkloric. La Senora Villa developed this dance troupe...

S: Were there any organizations?

V: The street itself (La Calle Siete) and the church.

S: Where did you go to school?

V: At Cole School on 12th and Poplar...then I went to Lafayette on West street and 20th, then at 4th grade I went to Catholic school at St. Mary's on 7th street.

S: Where were they (his parents) buried?

V: Here at Oakland - at St. Mary's, everybody got buried at St. Mary's... That's the only catholic cemetary it's up on Piedmont Hill...

S: Did they have Mexican type funerals?

V: Oh yes...we didn't go to the mortuary, we did everything in the front room, and all night long everybody making Mexican chocolate for the people to grieve with and a lot of Mexican bread and then after the funeral services, we mourned the nine days; after that the Novenario - the famous nine days. I remember them because they were so hard on on my knees, you had to pray the rosary, stay in the house and no music, and the women were all wearing black...

S: When did those kinds of customs begin to change?

V: I suppose with the second generation. Though it still goes on. With the new wave of immigrants that are coming up now, I suppose the culture will always be fertilized because a lot of people say that the second generation will be different, well a new wave is coming and there's a constant immigration that keeps fertilizing and keeping alive certain (customs)...I had a funeral last June and they went through the nine days...Another thing I remember about my childhood is that the old Star Theatre had matinees for the kids...

S: How much did they cost?

V: 10¢, everybody would go down to the Sunday matinees...I remember this one Sunday matinee, December 7th, they started at 1:30...and the next thing you know everything goes off and, "The children go home, your parents are waiting for you." Nobody know what was going on...so at that time, we lived on 12th and Market...we lived in some apartments above a real candy factory and a grocery store, would you believe the grocery store was owned by Japanese. I remember them because I used to play with the young one, and I remember the grandparents vividly . I walked into the grocery store and I looked all the way back where they lived... and there'd be the grandparents, and I remember we went upstairs, locked ourselves in, my Mom started to pray and I knew something was wrong. The next thing I knew , I walked downstairs the next day and the store was boarded up and my friend is no longer there. I never knew what happened...I remember vaguely the word, "Jap"...it was filled with such anger, the next thing I know new owners came in...

S: What other neighbors did you have?

V: ...a lot of Italian neighbors...I remember when we moved up to 14th and West, there was a neighbor María...and María would talk to her (in Italian, and my Mom would answer in Spanish. Among the first generation born here, we started speaking English, but never to our parents, aunts or uncles, it was very disrespectful, it was like a put down.

S: At the schools, the children were told not to speak Spanish ?

V: I never had that, once I got to St.Mary's, that's where I really began to see things, we happened to have a sister - a nun - who was a principal who was Mexican, Sister Mary Guadalupe...

S: Were there Black people in West Oakland?

V: There were, but I do remember mostly was in the second World War, you could see the change in coastal and they were mostly in West Oakland beyond Adeline...

S: There were probably not that many in paroquial schools were there?

V: No, no not that many, the big day came when the people started talking about the state buying up the houses for the freeway and you could see how a very contained community - in came the freeway and everybody moved out. A Parish that was very vital, very alive, membership went down so the only where to go was East Oakland, or head out towards Hayward...In my day if you were to move to East Oakland, you were getting up in the world.

Tape 1. Side 2

V: I was assigned to St. Bernard's on 62cnd Ave. , I was there from 66-70.

S: And there were a lot of Mexicans up there?

V: Uh-huh.

S: Newly arrived?

V: Newly arrived, yes. That was a whole new population for me.

S: Were they different from the people you had met before?

V: Yes, a lot of them you could see now, there was more education coming through. There's not the iliteracy that there was in the past...you could see that social agencies were available to help them out...and you can see clusters of families and towns. I know town in Mexico I've never been to, but I know them just by the number of people...at St. Bernard's I started the Spanish mass, which was the first Sunday Spanish mass...the style of ministry changed because those were the

V: days of Black Power, Chicano Power and everything and I said to myself "I wasn't trained for this."

S: There was a very radical Mexican group here...,but they probably weren't going to church...

V: No they weren't, but they expected the support of the church. I got involved with a group of high school students at Fremont High school. Chicano students, and my involvement began through a mimeograph machine we have this announcement but we don't know how to print copies...and it was a call, "Chicanos Unite" I saw it first hand - chairs through windows...it was the 60's you know, all hell broke loose...

S: Are there any...

V: Here in this parish I think I have the whole town of Charinga, Michóacan La Palma, Michóacan or ele you have a few from Durango and then a number from Zináparo, Michóacan...

S: Not so many from Jalisco then?

V: From Amatlán de Cañas...somebody must have started them coming, maybe an uncle way back in the 30's...

S: From Sinaloa?

V: A few, not that many....

S: Is there any feeling of resentment between old timers and new comers?

V: There is, more so not the first that came over but more the youth here between the Mexican Mexicans and the Mexican American.

S: Do they still want to be called Chicanos?

V: Yes, but don't call them Mexican Mexican...they have different styles, different music, even a different approach to religion.

S: I'm sure if anyone attacked them, they'd immediately be brothers...

V: Oh yes, exactly, but at first glance, no they don't. There's also the language, Mexican Americans speak English and they love American music, the oldies.

S: The youngsters aren't speaking Spanish any more?

V: Yes, but I think amongst themselves, they speak English and then only with the adults they speak Spanish.

S: Now, this parish, is it an old, old one?

V: Oh yes, it's more than one hundred years old.

S: This wasn't established first as Mexican?

V: Oh no!

S: St. Elizabeth's was German and St. Anthony's was what?

V: They would have said American, but Irish. Basically the parish now, 1981 would be majority Mexican and other Hispanics, a tiny bit Portuguese, Pilipinos, the Blacks and then the old whites...which would be your Irish. It was built from St. Mary's, St. Mary's is the mother church here in Oakland.

S: Are they (the Mexican immigrants) most legal?

V: My brother told me when he came to mass here, "My goodness, if the border patrol came to your 10 o'clock mass they'd even take you." It is a significant number...they come to a strange country, to a different culture and the one thing that is their tie with Mexico is the church... we have (the catholic elementary school) linguistic problems with the Mexicans, Pilipinos and the Blacks. The teaching is all English and then we introduce cultural things during the year...

S: Are most of the students Catholic? Including Blacks?

V: Yes, most of them are, I thik it's 87%.

S: Is your school growing in number?

V: Well, we have a waiting list. The analysis of this parish from the 1970's census was that it would be highly senior citizens. If you walk up and down the parish you can see that you have a lot of families.

S: That are newly arrived?

V: Yes. And you can see Franklin school and that's United Nations. You have Mexican kids, Koreans, Vietnamese, are now moving in, a lot of Vietnamese, into the area and Cambodians...

S: Many of the Vietnamese are Roman Catholic aren't they?

V: Oh yes...Father Peter York(1910) was a fiery Irishman...he was very much involved in the development of the unions - the carpenters, plumbers, he was a big union man. He supported the strike and would write the speeches , in fact downstairs in this house below there's a secret passageway and that's where he had his printing press...

S: Do you still see yourself in this kind of community role?

V: Something like that yes...we live in an area that's very union, so we don't have to fight for the union because the union is already here. But in different ways,like safeguarding the rights of the undocumented...

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

COMMENTARY ON FR. ANTHONY VALDIVIA TAPE

Father Anthony Valdivia's tape brings out several improtant factors that the other tapes did not cover: unionization; the turmoil of the 60's; the Japanese Internment; the effect of recently immigrated Mexicans and immigration patterns.

The Catholic Church in the Latino community has played a very important role since the time of the Conquest and missionaries. Once converted the Church has been the center of life in most Latino countries. It is important to understand this role if one truly wants to analyze the Chicano Mexicano community.

While this tape did not directly do this, one can see the importance from some of the comments made by Fr. Anthony Valdivia.

All of the tapes thus far have emphasized the multi-cultural aspects of early West Oakland. Fr. Valdivia also emphasizes this point, however, he noticed the multilingualism of the churches. He mentions that St. Joseph's had mass in English, Portuguese and Italian. The priests were multilingual. Here we see the Church attempting to mold itself to the community, a community of newly arrived immigrants who spoke little or no English.

The Churches in predominantly Chicano Mexicano communities continue to do this as is evidenced by Spanish mass. Fr. Valdivia points out that when newly arrived Mexican immigrants arrive in the U.S. they are coming to a different language and culture. Their one strong bond to Mexico is the church. Upon being asked whether a large percentage of his mass was attended by undocumented workers he answered, "it is a significant number." This is important because most undocumented workers have strong fear towards using many services because they are afraid of being deported. In the case of the Church however, they overcome their fear to attend it. The ties are obviously very strong. It would be interesting to ask some of the interviewees how important a role the church played in their lives when they first arrived in this country. Did it serve as a shock barrier? Did it help to minimize cultural shock? Did the Church's role lessen in importance as the years went by, or for the succeeding generations? How important was the Church socially? Does the role of the Church continue to play as vital a role today as it did in the first half of the century? (ie: clubs for the youth, social events, help to the needy, etc).

Judging from Fr. Valdivia's comments, it would appear that the church is not as important to Chicanos as it is to Mexican immigrants. He mentions that Mexican Americans are more "independent." This could suggest that the Church does indeed serve as a shock barrier and this possible role should be looked into further.

Another interesting point that Fr. Valdivia repeatedly brought out was that of unionization. According to him, many of the Mexicanos fleeing the Mexican Revolution were involved in unionization efforts here in California. (He specifically mentions the afl and Harry Bridges.) This would be a fascinating area to research. One of the reasons that Mexican immigrants are often resented is that they are viewed as strike-breakers, scabs or esquiro roles. It would be interesting to note whether those involved were here legally or not, how large of a percentage were Mexicanos, and in what occupations were they organizing? Many of the unions were known to be blatantly racist, did the Mexicanos and Blacks join voluntarily or were they recruited? How did union members view recently immigrated people, etc.

While many people assume that most of the Mexicanos fleeing the Revolution of 1910-20 were of the upper class, the Revolution was lost. Therefore many of those who fled during the later stages of the Revolution were probably those who sympathies lied with it. Fr. Valdivia specifically

mentions that they were, "involved in the union activities of Harry Bridges and they really got into that - I suppose that was a carry over of the fight for a better cause in Mexico..."

The presence of Braceros - brought here during WWII to alleviate the manpower shortage is briefly touched by Valdivia. I found that it was interesting that the wave that came in 1918 was not mentioned by other interviewees. In 1918 Mexicanos were recruited to work in the U.S. under contract-labor agreements due to the shortage of workers caused by WWI. Judging from some of the tapes there was a wave of Mexican immigrants around this time. This then could be due to two factors: those fleeing the devastation caused by the Revolution and those looking and recruited for work. It would be interesting to see how many of each group settled in Oakland.

Braceros (the term coming from the word "brazo" or arm was used because the majority worked in agriculture) may not have settled much in Oakland itself since by the 1940's (the program ran from 1942-47) much of the orchards had been replaced by industry.

Also concerning migration patterns is the phenomenon of entire villages having migrated to the U.S. Fr. Valdivia mentions this occuring in the cases of Charinga and La Palma, Michoacan. It would be interesting to see how and why these patterns have changed over the years. Why are so many of the immigrants in this area from Michoacan and Jalisco? It would be interesting to compare these migration patterns between the different ethnic groups which immigrated into Oakland. Did they follow similar patterns? Did this facilitate their assimilation into U.S. culture? Did this help in keeping their culture alive? Perhaps both?

One last aspect needs to be discussed, that of how recently arrived Mexican immigrants and the more established and/or native born Mexicanos Chicanos get along. Do the Chicanos help the Mexicanos or vice versa? Fr. Valdivia mentions the the resentment lies more so amongst the youth than the adults. This is important to examine, especially today when there are gangs and the Frutivale neighborhood is becoming more diverse as Blacks Vietnamese, Koreans and Cambodians come in. Are the Latinos uniting now as other groups come in or does the rift continue to exist between the "Mexican Mexicans" and the Mexican Americans? This is an important point to be researched amongst all ethnic groups which settled in Oakland.

In summary, the most important points brought out on this tape were unionization, the role of the church in the Latino community (especially amongst the undocumented) and migration patterns.